REVIEW OF DIPLOMA THESIS

Review type: Opponent´s Review

Author of the diploma thesis: Shahla Babayeva

Title: Crisis Communication Challenges in Türkiye´s Centralized Disaster Response: A Case Study of the Kahramanmaras Earthquakes

Author of the review: Prof. PhDr. Martin Potůček, CSc., MSc.

The thesis presents a relatively short but condensed and well-structured case study of the specific response of the Turkish state and society to the extremely destructive natural disaster of the 2023 earthquake, based primarily on the application of the theory of actor-centered institutionalism combined with process tracing. Five semi-formalized interviews with actors of the events served as the main source of primary data.

I begin with the pros of the study under review. It is based on the careful exploitation of rich literature, drawing on literature specialized in the analysis of state responses to natural disasters, in addition to classic theoretical and methodological inspirations from public policy.

Political developments in Turkey over the last thirty years or so are discussed in some detail. The conditions and ways of responding to the analyzed crisis are divided into technological, socio-political (in the chosen terminology, sociological), and organizational aspects. It is argued that the fundamental problem of the Turkish approach to dealing with similar crises is the form of rigid centralization of the responsible disaster management institution, which corresponds to the autocratic regime governing the whole country. Unsurprisingly, this situation has resulted in many major failures in responding to the widespread humanitarian and material losses caused by the earthquake in the affected regions. The thesis also analyses the communication barriers caused by the politicization of the entire administrative system and the lack of cooperation between the public administration, the army, and non-governmental organizations.

However, I have several comments on the methodological part of the thesis. The primary data is based on five semi-structured interviews, and the author used a snowball sampling method to select respondents. Here I would have expected a better justification of both the number and the method of their selection. Also, the recording of interviews in the form of written and later on destroyed transcripts of their content and the absolute anonymization of respondents (both approaches legitimized by the political threat to respective persons) raises the question of the possibilities of replication and generalization of the research findings. I also noted a serious contradiction between the value-loaded

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wording of the questions as quoted on page 25 and the value-free questions in the questionnaire (refer to Appendix I).

A few comments on the editing of the paper, which is otherwise written in very good English:

P. 32: Number of wounded people: 115.00?

P. 33, 37 The term *Deprem Dayanisma* is not explained.

P. 35 The term *jandarma* is not explained.

P. 41 Author Scharph (2000) is not included in References.

iv Abbreviations NVM, TIP, PTSD, JDP are used, but not explained in the List of Abbreviations.

Question for defense:

How would you select respondents to best represent the set of interest-differentiated actors in the event being analyzed?

For the above reasons, I recommend the diploma thesis for the defense.

My grading is "C or D", according to the response to the question.

Date: 27. 6. 2024   Signature:

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